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ABSTRACT

A study examined the relevancy of freshman composition to writing in the workplace. Four professionals in middle management who had been out of college for a number of years were surveyed by e-mail about their writing in the workplace, college education, freshman writing classes, and importance of seven skills employers want employees to have. Results indicated that: (1) all the participants felt that effective workplace writing must be concise, clear, and effectively written; (2) all the participants had negative attitudes toward writing in the workplace; (3) the participants varied in their awareness of the steps used for their writing process; and (4) all participants hold negative attitudes toward their freshman writing classes. Findings suggest that the participants could not relate what they did in their freshman writing classes to writing they do in the workplace. Proposals for improving this situation include bringing in professionals to talk to students and help design assignments, examining with students the kinds of writing required in jobs that interest them, encouraging students to reflect on their writing to develop metacognitive awareness of their writing process, and analyzing the usefulness of typical assignments in meeting these goals. Contains 7 references and 2 tables of data; the questionnaire is attached. (SC)

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ED 429 315

Writing in the Workplace and Freshman Writing Classes: An Imperative for Relevancy

by Mark Sidey

CS 216 684

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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Writing in the Workplace and Freshman Writing Classes:

An Imperative for Relevancy

Many of the students in my freshman writing classes at a Midwestern regional commuter campus see the class as ancillary to "real" classes. This is because my students often cannot see a connection between what they hope to do after college and the work they do in the writing class. Therefore the students often have little motivation to write--one of the reasons for poor attendance, incomplete drafts, and insufficient revision. To try to prevent this situation, the first assignment I give my students is to explore the importance of effective writing in a job that they hope to have after graduation. To complete the assignment, the students are to interview at least one person who currently holds the position that they are writing about. The goal is for students to learn from people who are writing on the job. In addition, I include the following rationale with the assignment:

> This assignment is designed to induce you to think about the importance of writing after college. Often students feel that writing classes are secondary to "real" classes. This attitude may lead students to do the minimum necessary to get through writing classes. However, students often find, once they have begun their careers, that writing skills are necessary in the real world. This assignment allows you to explore how important good writing skills will be to you after college—while you have the opportunity to acquire these skills in college.

After some time spent complaining that engineers, accountants, and nurses never write, the students do the assignment and generally find that people in their major do write on the job and that what these people write must be well-written so as to portray a positive image of the writer to higher ups and to customers. However, learning the importance of effectively in the workplace

does not induce many students to maximize the opportunity to learn to write in their freshman writing class.

Part of the problem with students not becoming instantly motivated to learn to write after completing the above assignment is that it is hard for people to continue to think about the future and work towards a rather long-term goal. Thus to motivate students it is important that teachers find a way to appeal to students' needs for instant gratification. But another facet of the problem is the lack of emphasis in composition pedagogy on the connection between freshman writing classes and workplace writing. Our English Department's writing program handbook makes a token mention of how the four rhetorical aims (informative, persuasive, argumentative, and expressive) we teach apply to academic and nonacademic writing. However, this applicability is seldom mentioned or discussed at length in department roundtables. Nor is the relevancy to workplace writing mentioned in the standard composition journals—a manual search of the last five years of College English and College Composition and Communication produced only one article that obliquely relates to the relevancy of freshman writing classes to workplace writing (Sullivan et al 1997).

Additionally, many freshman writing teachers have only written in academia or, as is the case with myself, lack current experience writing outside of academia. As a result, writing teachers may not understand how freshman writing relates to workplace writing. Thus it seems that the connection between freshman writing classes and workplace writing is not a hot topic with writing teachers. But it should be a topic on writing teachers' minds because, as the results of a preliminary case study of four white-collar middle management college graduates strongly suggest, students must see a relevancy to freshman writing classes and their post academic careers if they are to take the class seriously. Freshman writing teachers can complain about

negative student attitudes toward writing, but until we understand for ourselves what role freshman composition plays in preparing students for writing in the workplace *and* communicate this knowledge to our students, there is little likelihood that students' attitudes towards freshman writing will improve.

Review of Literature

As was mentioned above, there is a dearth of information in current composition journals on the relationship between freshman composition and workplace writing and what is in the journals is conflicting. Sullivan et al (1997) conducted an extensive review and overhaul of the writing program at Temple University. After their review, the researchers concluded that writing teachers "must take on the daily struggle to challenge school culture, examining and revising the school's traditional role as domesticator, software installer, and employee producer" (p. 389). I agree that writing teachers should not be strictly concerned with producing employees that meet the requirements of business. However as Smith (1997) notes, by entering college, students are seeking "to join an elite" and would like to "learn those rules [that will help them enter the elite] and assume teaches are there to teach them" (p. 304). Teaching students how to successfully write in the workplace is part of the responsibility teachers assume when they teach freshman writing. Students are in college to get ahead, and it is unconscionable for writing teachers to ignore this goal and to not help students become effective workplace writers.

As they pursue their quest to get ahead and advance their careers, the writing that students do in the workplace will be a key component in their success; "The ability to write well still creates economic power" (Lindeman 1995 p.4). In a study of the writing done by engineers and scientists at a chemical company, Paradis, Dorbin, and Miller (1985) identified the functions that writing fulfilled for their participants: transferring and archiving information, determining one's

place in the organization, self-promotion, stimulating ideas, and education. So not only did writing serve a communicative function, it also served a social function. Through the reports and other documents that Paradis et al's participants wrote, they established a network among other employees and established a reputation for themselves. Additionally the participants used writing to keep abreast of current trends in the company and in the field in general. Thus writing was an integral part of the careers of Paradis, Dorbin, and Miller's participants. Paradis, Dorbin, and Miller concluded that "The university can teach students how to solve writing problems in general, but it can hardly anticipate the full gamut of demands that industry makes on individuals" (p. 304). So freshman-writing teachers do not need to follow the dictates of industry; however, we should realize that to succeed our students will need to write well, and we should therefore help our students to learn to write in the workplace.

Further support for freshman writing teachers being concerned with the skills students will need in the workplace comes from Jolliffe (1998) who contends that workplace literacy is the "latest 'literacy crisis'" that high school and college "language arts educators" are being asked to solve. He notes that when it was discovered that Johnny could not read, "critical thinking and whole language pedagogies" were developed. Similarly, when it was discovered that students could not write, "composing process pedagogies" were developed. Jolliffe asked what English teachers should do since it has been discovered that students and workers cannot "read, write, think quickly and critically, and solve problems" (p. 285). To answer his research question, Jolliffe visited industries in the Chicago area and interviewed workers, analyzed the documents read and written by the workers, and discussed "ways of preparing a labor force for the new literacy of the changing workplace" (p. 285). From his research, Jolliffe concluded that:

> . . . workplace literacy must be seen as an issue for English educators in high schools, colleges, and universities to study and act upon as this century closes and the next begins. No one in English should say, "Oh, that has nothing to do with my students." It does. Let me propose as well, however, that we be concerned about workers' reading, writing, speaking, and thinking abilities, but not that construct a "skills gap," describe it in crisis terminology, and act upon it with the kind of unitary solution that frequently follows cries of crisis. Literate workers—and literate managers—in all fields need more than "basic skills," and we as English educators need to do more than one thing to prepare our students for a new world of work. (pp. 285-86)

According to Jolliffe then, writing teachers face a challenge that cannot be solved by burying our heads in the sand or by developing a one-size-fits-all solution.

This challenge is a direct result of the shift from a Fordist economy to a post-Fordist economy. The adage that best describes the Fordist economy is, "You could get a Model T in any color as long as it was black." In the Fordist economy, then, there was mass production for mass consumption. This type of production was "characterized [by] steady, repetitive, and uncreative" work (p. 286). Because work was so monotonous, there were few demands on workers to be literate. Now, however, there is niche marketing. Production is geared to small market segments and has to be in tune with rapidly shifting consumer demands. Thus in the post-Fordist economy there is "increased flexibility of both labor and consumption" (p. 287). Jolliffe states that "work must be flexible, frequently collaborative, and open to changes in production in response to the demands of small sectors of the market . . . . . [Therefore] all workers must be

efficient and critical readers, creative thinkers, and effective speakers and discussion participants. In other words, they must be literate workers" (p. 288).

To compete in the post-Fordist economy, employers want employees to have the following skills:

- knowing how to learn;
- listening and oral communication;
- adaptability, or creative thinking and problem solving;
- personal management, or self-esteem, goal setting, motivation, and personal and career development;
- group effectiveness, including interpersonal skills, negotiation, and teamwork;
- influence, or organizational effectiveness and leadership;
- ability to access and create information via technology. (p. 290)

Thus literacy in the post-Fordist workplace goes beyond basic reading and writing skills.

Odell, Goswami, and Quick (1998) also looked at workplace literacy in a study that compared workplace writers with academic writers. Odell and is co-researchers asked if composition teachers could learn anything of value from studying writing done in the workplace. To answer their question, the researchers analyzed the writing of five legislative analysts and five college undergraduates. The legislative analysts were selected because they "did research, analyzed legislation, wrote various types of memos and reports, and drafted letters . . . " (p.176). The undergraduates were chosen because, according to their grades, they were good writers who had taken several economic and political science classes. Thus the undergraduates had the type of background that would have qualified them to become legislative analysts upon graduation.

Part of Odell et al's research methodology was to obtain and analyze writing samples from their two groups of participants. The analysis of the samples revealed that the writing of the

undergraduates and the analysts was geared to "providing information and/or justifying a conclusion" (p. 177). In addition, Odell et al asked both sets of writers if they would be willing to eliminate clauses and sections in which the writer had "asserted a conclusion, had provided a rationale for a conclusion, [or] had provided additional information" (p.177). The participants were told that the passage did not "necessarily need to be deleted." Odell et al contend that "this procedure allowed writers to talk in some detail about context" (177). In their justifications for keeping or deleting a section, both the undergraduates and the analysts referred to their audience. However, as Table 1 indicates, there were significant differences in the two groups concept of audience and audience awareness:

Table 1

Audience	Undergraduates	Analysts
Concept of audience	Impersonal and vague; referred to unknown "readers" or "whoever reads this"	Specific and personal; knew who their readers would be
Audience awareness	Knew little of their prof's personality and values (the prof was the primary audience for the students)	Knew their readers' values, interests, and concerns
Application of audience awareness	Knew not to define terms common to the field but did so because "not everyone had heard of it"	Knew that if they omitted certain statements, they would be called on the carpet.

Just as both the undergraduates and the analysts referred to their audience to explain why they would or would not delete a clause, both sets of subjects were also able to recognize that certain passages emphasized a point or strengthened their argument. As we see from Table 2, Odell et al found differences in the level of sophistication in how the two sets of subjects applied this knowledge to the circumstances they were writing in:

Table 2

Circumstances	Undergraduates	Analysts
Context	Did not contexualize their arguments.	Contexualized their arguments in an ongoing discussion.
Prediction of possible reader reactions	Based on tentative and brief scenarios	Based on prior experience.
Possible consequences	Did not anticipate	Imagined consequences and make predictions

So what Odell Goswami, and Quick discovered was that the legislative analysts anticipated the needs and questions of their audience and how their audience would react to their arguments. In contrast, the undergraduates were unable to anticipate their audience's needs or reactions.

These researchers also discovered that the undergraduates and the analysts used different conceptual strategies:

> The analysts were concerned with questions that lead one to think critically about the texts one is writing about. Further, these questions seem useful both for generating ideas and for evaluating a draft of one's writing. The undergrads, by contrast, seemed concerned with questions that do not lead one to think critically about the subject matter one is discussing and that are more useful for evaluating a draft on one's writing than for generating ideas. (p. 182)

Because of the differences in the undergraduate's and analysts' concept of audience and context and writing strategies, Odell et al contend that teachers need to look at the assignments they give and their responses on student papers to see if, as many teachers claim, they are really promoting critical thinking. The researchers do not advocate reducing "academic writing (or, indeed, academic course work) to a form of vocational training" since many students will take jobs outside of their majors (p. 193). Therefore, this study supports the continuance of freshman

composition but with teachers asking themselves, "What conceptual strategies constitute the core of my course?" (p. 192).

Beaufort (1998) also contends that composition classes should not become vocational training since "We cannot possibly teach all students all genres they will need to write in their careers . . . " (p. 197). Beaufort does note the contradiction between students being primarily taught academic writing but eventually needing to write outside of academia. Thus Beaufort's research question was, "Does learning standard 'school' genres such as the academic essay or research paper translate into useful knowledge in the world of writing white papers, newsletters, proposals, laboratory reports, and business letters?" (p. 179). To answer her questions, Beaufort interviewed and observed for one year a female who received a B.A. in English. The subject, Ursula, graduated in 1991 from "a prominent state university (among the top ten U.S. post-secondary institutions)" (p. 187).

The majority of Ursula's writing in college consisted of writing literary essays. On the job Ursula was introduced to "a number of new genres—the 30-second public service announcements, the press release, the newsletter, the grant proposal, the board minutes (a legal document), the speech, [and] the procedure manual" (p.191). Initially, Ursula saw little connection between the writing she had done in college and the writing she was doing on the job. After 8 months on the job however, Ursula stated that "the critical thinking thing, [she learned in her writing classes in college] did help me bring ideas together" (p. 195). Ursula did find that she "had to get to the punch line quickly" when she wrote in the workplace since her audience in the workplace was not forced to read her writing as were her college professors (p. 193).

Beaufort's findings mirror some of the findings of Odell et al. For example, after being on the job for a year Ursula had developed a great deal of audience and institutional awareness.

Like the legislative analysts in Odell et al's study, Ursula was able to use this contextual knowledge to make her writing effective. Ursula was also able to rely on models from her organization and other similar organizations and on people within her organization "as she was drafting and editing documents" (p. 194). Occasionally, Ursula was able to "go into a computer database and snatch formats . . . and even chunks of text to build upon directly" (p. 194). However, Beaufort found that Ursula did not have "any metacognitive awareness of the writing skills that she could transfer from one context for writing to another" (195). Therefore, Beaufort concluded that composition teachers should help students develop a metacognitive awareness (self-awareness of the steps one is performing and the strategies one is using as one writes) of their writing process. She also contends that teachers need "to figure out what skills or strategies we might teach that will be useful in a variety of writing situations" (p. 197). In other words, writing teachers cannot teach students how to write in academia.

The research of Paradis, Dorbin, and Miller, Jolliffe, Odell et al, and Beaufort indicates that freshman composition teachers should define the role that freshman composition plays in preparing students for writing in the workplace. Paradis, Dorbin, and Miller's research shows that writing in the workplace is a key component in career advancement—a goal many students are in college to achieve. As Jolliffe points out, the post-Fordist economy demands that most workers be critical thinkers and therefore writing teachers need to develop a multi-faceted approach to teaching writing. Odell et al's comparative study indicates that student writers are not as sophisticated in their treatment of audience, context, and writing strategies as are workplace writers. Therefore, freshman writing teachers (and writing program directors) need to develop writing course and class goals that will move student writers closer to the skills needed by workplace writers. Beaufort's case study indicates that student writers can make the jump to

workplace writing but may do so without knowing how what they learned in their college writing can help them write on the job. Thus freshman composition teaches need to help students develop genre awareness and cross genre writing skills.

Case Studies on Freshman Composition

To further research the relevancy of freshman composition to writing in the workplace, I asked four professionals to complete a survey on the writing they do in the workplace and their freshman composition class(es) (for a copy of the survey, see Appendix A). Below are the results of this survey. These are four preliminary case studies designed to determine if there is empirical evidence to support anecdotal evidence that workplace writers often fail to see a positive connection between freshman composition and workplace writing.

Subjects:

The four participants were chosen because they have been out of college for a number of years and have moved into middle management. Being in middle management, the participants have had time over the years to gauge the importance of writing to their careers. Thus each subject can provide a perspective to judge the relevancy of freshman composition to workplace writing. Three of the participants were male (Jim, Imen, and Bill) and one participant was female (Deb). Jim received a B.S. in electrical engineering in 1991; he is a staff software engineer at an electronics manufacturer. Imen received a B.S. in mathematics in 1975 and an M.B. A. in 1995; he is a portfolio research analyst with an insurance company. Bill received a B.S. in accounting in 1985 and a M.B.A. in 1995; he is a business instructor at a community college. Deb received a B.S. in accounting in 1987 and a M.B.A. in 1994; she is a business planning coordinator with an aerospace firm.

Methods:

The survey was e-mailed to each participant. The participants also e-mailed back their responses. Since the surveys were concerned with writing, e-mail was chosen over interviewing. At a latter date, the participants' answers can be rhetorically analyzed to determine what the participants' writing reveals about writing in the workplace and the participants' attitudes toward writing. The survey was divided into three sections: the participants' job and writing in the workplace, the participants' college education and freshman writing classes, and the participants' ranking of the importance the seven skills employers want employees to have in the post-Fordist economy.

Results & Discussion:

All the participants indicated that it is very important that they write effectively on the job. Deb noted that even though the supervisors who would read her work are more experienced writers, she wanted to write as effectively as possible so that she does not waste upper management's time and "make a fool" of herself. The participants' definitions of effective writing were also similar:

> Jim: Conveying technical details correctly and in a way that is understandable.
>
> Bill: Clear and concise.
>
> Imen: Being able to communicate the main points of an idea effectively, timely, concisely, and in the proper form (oral, written formal, written informal).
>
> Deb: It [effective writing] reflects the content correctly and clearly with no grammatical errors.

Only Deb introduced grammar into the definition of effective writing. Her mention of grammar was likely due to the influence of a former supervisor who had a PhD. in English and had given Deb "grammatical feedback." But all the participants felt that effective workplace writing is concise and clear.

Given that all the participants noted that it was important for them to write effectively, their attitudes toward writing seem somewhat contradictory. All the participants had similar negative attitudes toward writing in the workplace:

> Jim: I'd rather not write documents but they are needed for the job.
>
> Bill: Dread it.
>
> Imen: Communication is highly important in my workplace. In some cases it can make the difference between success and failure in a task or project. Writing and communication in general must be a high priority in my workplace to survive. Effective communication (oral and written) are specified on several job posts in my area. It is part of my performance appraisal every year.
>
> Deb: I feel it is important but do not volunteer to do any additional writing.

None of the participants relish writing; Bill's pithy comment seems to best summarize the group's attitude toward writing. Imen wrote the longest response, but it is a very impersonal response that avoids answering the question and thus reveals that Imen likely dreads writing. Years after college and after years of writing on the job, my participants share an apprehension towards writing with students in freshman writing classes.

The participants are split on metacognition or awareness of the steps of their writing process. Deb articulated a fairly elaborate process:

> I start with what was written last year, modify it to fit this years objectives, review it, change, and when I feel comfortable, I send it out in draft form for comments to many upper level management. I keep track of the many versions in electronic and hard copy form. I typically end up with 10-12 versions before the final is submitted. There are several levels of management review; first is at the business unit, second is at Sr. Staff level including the GM, and third is final review by the GM (who is very good at writing).
>
> When I write emails, I generally go through the same process. I type my first draft, review, change and send. Sometimes, I let it sit for several hours or a day and review it again before sending. It usually depends on the subject, time available, and audience. If the audience is upper management, I spend a lot of time making sure it is correct. If not, I do not spend as much time but edit if frequently.

Imen also knew what steps he takes as he writes:

> First, determine what type of communication is needed (oral, written, formal informal). Second, try to organize my thinking and determine the audience that I am communication with. Third, to communicate in the form that is most efficient. In my job, most communication from me is expected to be concise and to the point. If I am trying to convey a point, and need several pages to do it, it usually does not get read, due to the pace of events happening in my workplace.

Jim feels that form dictates process:

> Technical documents have a specific order and manner to be written so the topics are defined. Not much planning is needed.

With his characteristic conciseness, here is Bill's response to the question on what steps he takes as he writes:

> None.

It is likely that Deb and Jim took their freshman composition classes after the process movement began. Therefore, it is interesting that Deb (possibly a product of the process movement) and Imen (definitely not a product of the process movement) both know that they have a process. Jim and Bill either are not aware of their process or did not think about their process as they answered the question. Bill, and Jim, probably do have a procedure that they follow and are either being disingenuous or like Beaufort's participant, Ursula, lack metacognition of their process.

Just as the participants shared similar views on writing in the workplace, they had similar views on freshman composition. Since it had been some time since they had taken freshman composition, some of the participants remembered little of the class. However, all the participants were able to remember their attitudes and motivation towards freshman composition:

> Jim: Didn't like writing at all for the class. I really don't remember much about my freshman comp. class. I never really liked English classes in general so I put those experiences out of my mind.

> Imen: At that time my motivation was probably not very high. I was a science/mathematics/business student and focus was more on my core courses at the time. If the class would have been geared toward my academic path, my motivation may have been higher. I believe I viewed the class as a "rounding out" of my personal knowledge base, more than as a tool for me to learn to communicate better in the workplace. Because of this, I probably didn't put the proper emphasis on it. This was probably a mistake on my part.
>
> Bill: Negative Attitude & NOT Motivated.
>
> Deb: I had a poor attitude towards writing until I took my composition classes at [another college]. I attribute this to my liking my professor as well as maturity. I still feel I am weak at writing but continue to improve everyday in the workplace.

So in addition to sharing a dread of writing, my participants and freshman composition students share negative attitudes towards freshman writing classes. And years after taking their freshman writing classes the participants were able to vividly recall their negative attitudes. So as teachers, we must work to make freshman writing a positive experience.

The participants were divided on their responses to the question which asked if their 1st year composition classes helped prepare them to write in the workplace. Jim responded with an emphatic "no!" Bill stated that his freshman writing class did not help him write on the job. Imen recalled that his freshman writing class was challenging, but he did not state that the class helped him write on the job. Deb felt that her writing classes did give her a foundation "from which [she] could begin to write" on the job. However she could not state exactly what the foundation was the classes gave her. Perhaps like Ursula, Deb's writing classes encouraged her to think critically and she is able to draw on this skill as she writes in the workplace. But even though the participants felt that freshman writing classes were of dubious or unknown value in preparing them to write in the workplace, all but Bill stated that if they could go back and take freshman comp again they would pay more attention to the teacher and try harder on their assignments.

Conclusion

For the participants in this study the relevancy of freshman composition, years after taking the class, is, for the most part, unclear. ~~None of~~ The participants could not relate what they did in their freshman writing classes to the writing they do in the workplace. As a follow up, the participants could be asked what they remember from their introductory classes within their major and the relevance of these classes to the work they do on the job. Their responses to this question would establish a benchmark to compare their opinions on the relevancy of freshman composition against. Even without this benchmark, it is clear that these college graduates do not see the relevancy of freshman composition to their writing in the workplace. In this era of increased scrutiny on education, an emphasis on holding teachers accountable, and an influx of non-traditional college students into all institutions, it is unrealistic to expect that students will continue to pay for classes that they do not see as relevant to their life outside of academia; freshman composition cannot simply be a service class students take to be able to write papers in their other classes.

Nor can freshman composition be a class with a strictly liberal educational aim. Imen noted that he thought that the purpose of his freshman composition class was to round out his knowledge base. Jim wrote that he did not see any value in writing about characters in books. Essentially, what Jim and Imen are saying is that their freshman composition classes were part of a liberal education—an education that they did not see the value or purpose of. To increase the relevancy of freshman writing to workplace writing, each of the participants stated that they would introduce more models of workplace writing into freshman composition—a pedagogical practice supported by Beaufort's findings (Ursula used models). But Odell contends that freshman composition should not become vocational training. And Paradis, Dorbin, and Miller

and Beaufort tell us that we cannot teach all the genres that students will face. What then are freshman composition teachers to do? Students do not see the value of classes with a liberal education focus so therefore their motivation is poor, yet strictly vocational training is problematic because genres change, students take jobs outside their majors, and we are not qualified to teach some genres and do not have the time to teach every genre.

What we can do is integrate liberal educational aims with helping students prepare to write in the workplace—it need not and should not be an either or situation. Providing students with models of workplace writing and exploring with students how what we do in freshman composition will help them write in the workplace need not preclude liberal educational aims. Almost unanimously, the participants stated that it was very important to important that employees in their company have the critical thinking, communication, and collaborative skills employees need in the post-Fordist economy. Developing these skills is part of a liberal education.

Fortunately, the news is not all bad. Three of the participants did state that if they had to take freshman composition over again they would pay more attention and would be more motivated. After writing in the workplace for a number of years, the participants realize the value of writing effectively. It is incumbent on freshman composition teachers to impart this knowledge to their students. And we are in a unique position to do this. David, Gordon, and Pollard (1995) write that "writing-intensive courses are not writing courses, courses in which the primary goal is learning to write" (p. 530). So even writing intensive courses within students' majors do not teach writing—freshman composition teachers teach writing.

To help us impart the importance of writing in the workplace, we need to bring people like the participants into our classrooms and to roundtables and conferences to talk with our

student and to help us design our assignments. As teachers, we have all heard the pejorative remarks about teaching and college: "Those that can do, those that can't teach;" "College teachers are not part of the real world;" and "College teachers live in ivory towers." Much as we may hate to admit it, there is an element of truth in these statements. How many freshman composition teachers really know what type of writing is being done in the workplace? Going to the source and bringing the source to other teachers and to students can help us prepare our students for the post-Fordist workplace and can help us establish credibility with our students. Lindeman writes, "If we will examine, together with our students, the kinds of writing required in jobs that interest them, they will discover important work-related reasons to improve their skills" (p. 4). The togetherness is the key—when my students to explore the importance of writing in their major, they do it on their own. I have to find the time to teach students the writing process and to explore with students the types of writing they will do in the workplace—not just with one assignment but throughout the semester.

As part of this exploration of workplace writing, the literature and the results of the survey show that we need to help our students develop the ability to move from genre to genre. We teach writing as a process—now we need to teach students to recognize various genres, the conventions of these genres, and to apply the appropriate processes to various genres as they draft and revise. We also need to require students to reflect regularly on their writing process so that they develop metacognitive awareness of their writing process. Perhaps this reflection will enable students to take something from freshman writing to the workplace. Further exploring what freshman writing teachers can do to make their classroom more relevant to workplace writing is an area for future research. Part of this research should include discovering the similarities and differences between what freshman-writing teachers and students feel the

relevancy is and should be between freshman writing and workplace writing. The research should also include determining the actual versus the stated goals of freshman writing classes and determining if there is a need to modify these goals to help prepare students to write in the workplace. Next the usefulness of typical assignments in meeting these goals should be analyzed. Additionally, future research would entail a review of freshman composition textbooks to determine what the texts tell students about the connection between freshman composition and workplace writing. In the interim, it is clear that freshman writing teachers need to reevaluate how what they are doing relates to the writing that students will do after they graduate and enter the workplace.

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Appendix A

Freshman Composition Questionnaire

This survey is being conducted for a graduate level English class at IPFW. The purpose of the survey is to determine the effectiveness and relevance of freshman college composition classes in preparing students for writing in the workplace. As someone who has been out of college for a number of years and as someone who has risen into middle management, your perspective will be particularly useful. You may chose to answer each question with individual sentences or you may combine your answers into paragraphs or a narrative. Please be as detailed and as specific as possible. All results will be confidential and you may e-mail me in mid-May for the results of this survey. Thank you for your cooperation.

Your job:

Company:

Position/title:

How long have you held this position?

What are your major job responsibilities?

What do you write for you job?

How much time do you have to write on the job?

How much flexibility do you have in selecting your topic?

What steps do you take as you write?

Do you try to get feedback on your writing before submitting it to the final reader(s)? If yes, who do you get feedback from and what do you ask them to do as they read?

How much of your writing is collaborative?

What type of feedback do you receive from your end-users?

When you write, do you think about the needs and opinions of your readers?

How important is it that you write effectively?

How would you define writing effectively?

What are your attitudes towards writing in the workplace and how motivated are you to write in the workplace?

Other comments on the writing you do in the workplace?

College:

College degree (s) and institution (s):

What freshman or 1st year composition classes did you have to take?

Did you have to take any remedial English classes before you could take freshman comp?

What do you remember about the 1st year composition classes that you took? For example, what your assignments were and what you learned in the class.

Did the writing you did in 1st year composition classes help prepare you to write in the workplace? Why or why not?

What were your attitudes towards writing in your freshman composition classes and how motivated were you to write in these classes?

What do you think was the focus/purpose of the writing you did in your freshman composition classes?

What, if anything, would you do differently if you could go back into your freshman composition classes? Why?

Were you given any models for workplace writing in your freshman composition class? For example, letters, faxes, or e-mails.

What suggestions do you have for changing freshman composition classes?

Other comments on the writing you did in your freshman composition classes?

Skills that Employees Need:

How would you rate the need for employees in your company to have the following skills*: (You do not have to rank these skills in a hierarchy; if you feel each skill is equally important, rate them thusly). Please circle your answer.

1 = very important
2 = important
3= somewhat important
4 = not very important
5 = not necessary

Knowing how to learn	1	2	3	4	5
Listening and oral communication	1	2	3	4	5
Adaptability, or creative thinking and problem solving skills	1	2	3	4	5
Personal management, or self esteem, goal setting, motivation, and personal and career development	1	2	3	4	5
Group effectiveness, including interpersonal skills, negotiation and teamwork	1	2	3	4	5
Influence, or organizational effectiveness and leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to access and create information via technology	1	2	3	4	5

Do you see any correlation between the above skills and freshman composition classes? Why or why not?

From Jolliffe, David. "Preparing All Students for the New Workplace Literacy: Avenues for

English Instruction in High School and College." Expanding Literacies: English Teaching and the New Workplace. Ed. Mary Sue Garay and Stephen A. Bernhardt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. 285-297.